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SUBJECT Intelligence Activities

DANIEL SCHORR: Our subject today is, generally, intelligence activities, which is not always the same as saying intelligent activities. And some of the activities, I suspect, will play some part in the Reagan-Mondale debate tomorrow night. So I thought it'd be interesting to go into them today.

We have assembled for that purpose three persons who are expert in these activities. I suspect their views may differ some. The first is Ray Cline, a former Deputy Director of the CIA. Admiral Stansfield Turner, who was the Director of the CIA in the Carter Administration. And in New York, we have Representative Tom Downey, who has followed these episodes carefully and has views of his own on them.

Welcome to you all, gentlemen.

Question first of all to you, Admiral Turner. Here we have this manual which the White House said was written by a contract employee, wasn't really authorized, and is beginning to take its distance from this manual which talked about ways and possibilities of assassination, even of creating a martyr here and there by murdering one of their own Contras, and so on and so forth. Is it conceivable, from your knowledge of the CIA, that activity like that could be completely out of control? And if it was out of control, what does that say for the agency?

ADMIRAL STANSFIELD TURNER: The ironic thing, Dan, is that 8 1/2 years ago President Ford, on the recommendation of then-Director of the CIA George Bush, put out an order that said nobody will think about or conspire to conduct assassination. Now here the CIA, through one of its temporary employees, has issued a pamphlet which certainly can be interpreted in that way.

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You can interpret it lots of ways. But a peasant down in Nicaragua reading this would have very little question about it, and the President of the United States has had very little question about what it means because he's had an investigation started to see why somebody did this.

It appears to me that -- certainly, I would think George Bush doesn't want assassination. He originated this idea. So, I think the situation is out of control. Either the headquarters in Washington of the CIA doesn't have control of these people out in the field, or the White House doesn't have control of the headquarters of the CIA. I don't know which.

SCHORR: Well, the question is, is it conceivable that an employee in contact with the Contras, who are being funded and supported by the CIA, is in the position to write a document and hand it to them which has not gone through the very careful process that you would think these things would go through? And if it is conceivable, what does it say about the CIA and the whole control of that operation?

ADMIRAL TURNER: It's conceivable, but I don't know how much they've loosened the controls out there in the last 3 1/2 years. Certainly a good bit, from what one understands. And it should not be that way. Something like this should not get out without approval of somebody other than a contract employee who happened to think this was a good idea, and seems to have been a Rip Van Winkle for the last 8 1/2 years.

SCHORR: Ray Cline?

RAY CLINE: I find it very hard to take this particular document very seriously, Dan. I've read it all. It's old Ho Chi Minh, Mao Tse-tung rhetoric. It's mostly about how to build camps and how to set sentinels, and so on.

These few phrases which have been played up were obviously left in, unfortunately, from the American point of view. But the document is a document that someone provided to the Contras in Nicaragua, who are indeed engaged in guerrilla warfare. And as the document says, it may be necessary to kill people.

Now, that doesn't really shock me if they're trying to force the Nicaraguan government to change its personnel and its policies. And I don't imagine it will turn out that the CIA, which is supporting very indirectly, or was, according to the press and the Congress, supporting the Contras with money for a time, will turn out to have had very much to do with this particular document.

SCHORR: Congressman Downey, let me turn this question to you, but let me add a question. If you were advising Mr. Mondale on this issue for the debate tomorrow night, which maybe you are, for all I know, how would you advise him to handle this and how would you advise him to put it to President Reagan?

REP. TOM DOWNEY: Well, I think that Admiral Turner gave us a pretty good indication of one of the direction of the questioning that Mr. Mondale might make to the President. It's clear to me that if Mr. Casey knew about this, then potentially others in the Administration should have known, did they know? If Mr. Casey didn't know, why didn't he know?

The CIA is, after all, the world's most sophisticated information-gathering agency in the world. The work that they are doing in Nicaragua is something that I suspect gets very careful and close scrutiny because it is in the news all the time. To suggest for a moment that the agency was unaware of the production of this heinous document is, frankly, unbelievable to me.

So, I would raise it in that context for Mr. Mondale.

Mr. Cline makes a very excellent point. He said that this is much more in keeping with the ideology of Ho Chi Minh, Stalin, Muammar Qaddafi, or Idi Amin. It is not the work of Jefferson, Madison, or Lincoln. And those are the people who we are the traditional followers of. And it seems to me that in a democracy we should not be trying to play the tyrant to deal with tyranny. And that is, in fact, what we're doing.

So, I think this document has profound repercussions for U.S. foreign policy. I think it makes it much more difficult for us in the United States to say, "Well, we abhor terrorism," as we do, when in fact an agency of the United States Government has produced a manual like this.

SCHORR: Let me turn to both of you gentlemen with this question. Both Mondale and Speaker of the House Thomas "Tip" O'Neill have demanded the resignation of Director William Casey. In fact, sometimes, whenever something like this happens, they -- the first thing they say is demand the ouster of Casey for having -- but let me pose this question to you...

CLINE: They say demand -- they demand the ouster of Casey before they find out what the incident is, as in this case, usually.

SCHORR: But isn't he responsible? And if he's responsible, is it fair to ask...

CLINE: But do any of the three of us know what happened

with this document? Or does Tip O'Neill know? I don't.

ADMIRAL TURNER: I think Ray is right. We can't condemn Mr. Casey until he's been tried -- that is, until the investigation has been completed. But if Mr. Casey believes what Mr. Cline has said just a minute ago, he ought to be fired. Cline said there's nothing wrong with killing a few people. The only thing wrong with it, unless you're in a combat situation, is that the President of the United States has a written order that says you won't do that kind of thing.

CLINE: Now look, Stan...

ADMIRAL TURNER: If Mr. Cline doesn't want to obey with that order, that's his business. But it's not...

CLINE: You're misquoting me, as well as Mr. Casey.

ADMIRAL TURNER: No, I'm not. You said it didn't bother you at all that there was...

CLINE: That there was in the Contra organization, which is a guerrilla army fighting in Nicaragua, a manual telling guerrillas how to protect themselves and how to conduct psychological operations.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Ah, but that's not the phrase we're talking about. The phrase is the one that tells them how to take care of judges, who are not combat people. It says how you eliminate judges...

CLINE: Neutralize them, yeah. And you know that you neutralize people, often, by revealing their past record.

I doubt -- I do not think...

ADMIRAL TURNER: Oh, that is a joke.

SCHORR: Do you mean expose these judges in these newspapers? Is that the...

CLINE: To the people. Read the document. It says call a public meeting and neutralize these people, insuring that the people of the village approve of it.

SCHORR: I hate to interrupt this spirited -- Tom, hold on a minute. Everybody, hold on. You'll get your chance when we come back.

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SCHORR: We had to interrupt a spirited discussion of

that famous, now famous manual for the Contras in Nicaragua. Let me say where we are, briefly: that there's some disagreement about how serious a matter it is, some disagreement about where the authority for it lies and what should be done about it next.

Let's turn now to New York and Congressman Downey.

REP. DOWNEY: Well, the point I wanted to make before, Dan -- and it's one that Mr. Cline made -- is that part of this manual is guerrilla boilerplate, but part of it is just objectionable. Indeed, Edgar Chamorro, who was responsible for the publication and distribution of the manual, found it so offensive that he had to delete portions of it.

And I just want to read one very quick paragraph of what it says, because this is the portion that offends me, and I think should offend all Americans: "When the uprising occurs, professional criminals should be hired to carry out selective jobs, such as taking the demonstrators to a confrontation with authorities, to bring about uprising and shootings that will cause the death of one or more people to create a martyr for the cause."

I don't think the United States should be involved in telling people to behave this way.

SCHORR: Well, the question is to what extent the United States is involved.

REP. DOWNEY: Yeah.

CLINE: I don't think they were involved. I think that probably what really happened, if anybody would be honest about this and not conduct a kangaroo court of Bill Casey and the CIA, is the Contras, who are fighting a guerrilla war, said, "For heaven sakes, give us some of the classical material on it so we can show our soldiers what to do." And I don't know who it came from. But whoever it came from gave them pretty much an old-fashioned Leninist document. It says in it, "This is for Christianity and democracy." It's got a lot of good terms thrown in in place of Marxist terms. But it didn't excise the things that Chamorro is objecting to. They probably should have. If he tore them out, then there isn't even any real problem.

SCHORR: But if this thing is also harmless, why does the White House say, why does the White House act indignant about it and say, "This does not represent the policy of the United States. We're going to launch two investigations to find out who was responsible and how it happened."

CLINE: Because the kangaroo court is charging that Bill Casey...

SCHORR: The kangaroo court in the White House?

CLINE: ...authorized -- no, in the Congress. And if I may say so...

SCHORR: The Congress? There is no Congress right now.

CLINE: Dan, oh, come on. The congressmen are leading the charge. And you know that document was released to the AP by some congressman. It couldn't have come from any place else.

But besides that, let me finish the thought. The real issue is whether CIA or Bill Casey or the President authorized or instructed somebody to violate their own guidelines of committing an assassination.

SCHORR: I suggest to you that's only...

CLINE: And I say that's no.

SCHORR: You're going to be next, Tom. But I just...

CLINE: No, there is no such authorization.

SCHORR: I submit to you that's only half the question. Half the question is that somebody authorized. The other half of the question is if nobody authorized, how do such things happen?

CLINE: How does what things happen? The issuance, the distribution in a document...

SCHORR: How do people on the payroll of the CIA, which is a pretty closely run agency, dealing in a delicate situation, in a covert operation involving guerrillas trying to make their way into Nicaragua, where I think you know, at least in your day, people didn't go out there and act as rogue elephants, in the famous phrase of Senator Church.

CLINE: That's right.

SCHORR: You really try to keep control. And if there isn't that control...

CLINE: I'm sure they do today and that this document is not proof to the contrary. That's my position.

SCHORR: Tom Downey.

REP. DOWNEY: Can I suggest that there is a broader question. Part of the reason that the Congress of the United States passed and the President signed into law in October a law

forbidding military aid to the Contras is because of conflicting goals in foreign policy. The Administration has suggested for some time that the goal of aiding the Contras was to interdict arms from Nicaragua to El Salvador.

Now, it's quite clear from the publication of this manual, the comic books, the mining of the ports, and the activities of the Contras that they are not just interested in interdicting arms, they are interested in overthrowing the government of Nicaragua. And that is the reason, when I wrote to Congressman Boland to ask him to investigate this issue -- and he's Chairman of the House Intelligence Committee -- he wrote back to me and he said, "This is the reason why we cut off the aid, because you cannot distinguish what the policy is."

So it's not just a question of who's in control and who isn't in control. The question is, what is the policy? Do we believe that it is appropriate for us to overthrow the government of Nicaragua, or is it just appropriate to try and prevent arms from going into El Salvador.

CLINE: Let's put it just a little more precisely. Is it appropriate, in order to prevent the export of revolution and arms to El Salvador, to support a counter-guerrilla movement which is trying to overthrow the Nicaraguan government?

ADMIRAL TURNER: It is not appropriate because it's against the law. The Boland Amendment specifically prohibits the CIA from doing anything to overthrow the government of Nicaragua.

I think we should look at the broader issue before we...

[Confusion of voices]

SCHORR: ...enough time for me to sort of bring this part of the conversation to a close, which I'll bring to a close by recalling what I consider to be the ineffable words of James Angleton, who is the former Chief of Counterintelligence in the CIA. When he testified before the Church Committee at the time about how it happened that the CIA had squirreled away some toxins, although President Nixon had signed a treaty which said they wouldn't squirrel away such things, his answer was, "It is not the custom for a secret agency to follow the publicly proclaimed policies of the President."

Let's reflect on that for a minute while we take another break and come back and discuss more of this.

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SCHORR: Let me move this on a little bit. There's been

another incident involving the CIA. There's been a plane either has crashed or been brought down. At least, the guerrillas now claim that they brought it down, with the loss of four CIA personnel. Apparently, it was engaged in trying to track a guerrilla plane carrying arms.

Casey, whose name has come up here before, is quoted as saying, "Oh, there's certainly going to be a rumble tomorrow night over that."

What is your reaction to that, Admiral Turner?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Well, I think that's a very unfortunate phrase for Mr. Casey to have used, if he really did use it. This is a quote from Senator Goldwater about Mr. Casey. I think we again ought to get the facts on this before we pass judgment.

CLINE: The key fact, though, is the plane came down in El Salvador, not in Nicaragua, and that the Vincaramos (?) broadcasts are not noted for their accuracy. As soon as they hear of an American plane going down, they say, "We did it," just to build up their image.

I think you'll find this was a reconnaissance flight along the border and it crashed into a mountain, as Mr. Casey said.

SCHORR: But in political terms, Congressman Downey, here we have four Americans lost. There's been a lot said by this Administration on how carefully our policies have been conducted so that we don't lose Americans. Is that likely to be an issue?

REP. DOWNEY: Oh, I think it is.

And first, let me just offer my condolences to the families of the Americans who were killed. It is a tragedy for them.

CLINE: Yes, indeed.

REP. DOWNEY: And we shouldn't lose sight of that fact.

There's no question that -- the question of whether or not the War Powers Act comes into play here will be raised as an issue, and it's something that I'm thinking about. The committee was aware, both Intelligence Committees were aware of these flight activities for a number of years they had been conducted. So this is very much different than what we were talking about in the case of Nicaragua, where the manual, the comic books, and the mining of the ports were not known to the committee and not, frankly, in my opinion, justified.

Yes, this will be a political issue, but I don't think it carries the same impact, frankly, that what is happening in Nicaragua does.

SCHORR: There's one other issue I don't want to lose before we run out of time, which we will pretty soon, and that also involves intelligence, and it is Beirut. The Washington Post this past week had a story saying that there was explicit information that the CIA had passed on indicating that there were explosives had been brought into Beirut, targeted against American Embassy personnel. On top of that, we now have the story -- very close to CNN in a way -- the wife of Jeremy Levin, the missing bureau director of CNN in Beirut, said also that one of the people who is negotiating for her gave explicit warning, had explicit warning from the group which may have been responsible for this that they were planning something between September 20th and the 22nd, and it happened on the 20th. This may not be a failure of intelligence, but may be a failure of the use of intelligence material.

How do you react to it?

ADMIRAL TURNER: Oh, it certainly is. Whether or not there was this explicit warning from the CIA, the preparations to defeat a truck bomb against our new embassy were just totally inadequate. Even just having the example of two previous truck bombs in Beirut, they should have been much more alert than they were. They didn't need this intelligence to have at least taken better precautions than they did. It was totally indifferent to the lives of Americans.

SCHORR: Ray Cline?

CLINE: Well, here's where we almost agree.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Good.

CLINE: It was not an intelligence problem. There's plenty of intelligence about possible future incidents, but probably not precise enough to pinpoint a preparation, as is usually the case.

But the issue before the authorities, I think, was: Were the embassy people safer in West Beirut, which was literally getting out of control as a social instrument -- you can see that very clearly if you look at the television pictures of the Islamic fundamentalist demonstrations, even now -- or would they be safer in a partially finished embassy in another area? I think probably the wrong decision was made. But it was a technical decision. It was not that they were indifferent to the lives of our people. And I think that's another unfair allegation.

ADMIRAL TURNER: Oh, no, no. I didn't say the problem was moving...

SCHORR: I guess you don't almost agree.

ADMIRAL TURNER: ...from West to East Beirut. I won't quarrel with whether they should have moved or not. I think only the people on the scene can determine that. But in East Beirut, where they were, they did not have any kind of a simple procedure, like putting a truck across the road, to prevent a truck bomb from coming in. That was absolutely a matter of indifference, a casualness, a cavalierness that should not have been tolerated.

CLINE: It certainly should have been done. That's where we agree.

SCHORR: Congressman Downey?

REP. DOWNEY: Well, I agree with Admiral Turner. There is no question that we should have been forewarned, with the incidents that happened in the past. And frankly, their deaths, in my opinion, are a great tragedy, and in many ways, I believe, inexcusable.

SCHORR: Apparently, now there's even indication that there may be plans being made between now and the election for yet another bombing. Apparently, it is known to intelligence, the intelligence community that there are enough explosives left in Beirut for another bombing. We have now dependents being moved out of Beirut. I'm not quite sure whether this looks like standing tall.

CLINE: Dan, if we could just talk about a serious subject, it is that there are going to be lots of incidents and more Americans are going to be killed. And it isn't easy to protect them.

I think, with all this foreknowledge, when you see the climate of violence that exists in Lebanon today, stirred up in part by the Syrians, in part by the Iranians, in part by the Libyans, in part by the Soviet Union itself, we are in a terrible situation. We must take very strong measures and try to protect our people.

SCHORR: Tom Downey, we have about a half a minute left. I want to give that half-minute to you.

REP. DOWNEY: Well, I think that anybody who has read the Long Commission report about the Marine bombing last year has to take a very, very hard look at American policy in that region

of the world. As I stated before, both of the gentlemen in your Washington studio are experts on intelligence gathering and information. I think that we've seen some major failures in that operation. But more importantly, I think we've made some major policy mistakes, placing Marines in Lebanon for the purpose of trying to be a peacekeeping force, and then having them shelled from the Shouf Mountains, then getting all the intelligence about the fact that they are going to come under attack, and do nothing about it, not provide them the protection that they need. This is a tragedy not just of the intelligence agency, but of American foreign policy in general.

SCHORR: I think we have run out of time....